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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

GREGORY W. MEEKS
6TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

August 11, 2010

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AFRICA AND GLOBAL HEALTH

MB
Retransmission

1357

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communication Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski,

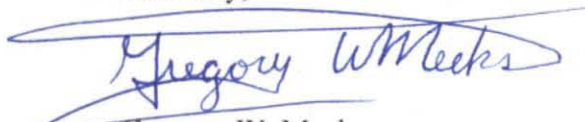
Many of the existing retransmission consent agreements between multichannel video programming distributors ("MVPDs") and broadcasters are set to expire within the next few weeks. If the parties cannot reach timely agreements, millions of New York residents could be left without access to programming.

Television viewers are undoubtedly harmed when channels are taken off the air due to a failure to reach compromise; however, simply the public threat of a station taking their signal off the air can cause complications that will adversely affect consumers also. While I understand the process for negotiating retransmission consent agreements takes time and can be a complex process, I am concerned about the continued uncertainty as to whether widely viewed programs will be available to millions of consumers in New York.

I would urge the Federal Communications Commission to begin to look at revising the rules by which retransmission consent agreements are considered. The means by which retransmission consent agreements are negotiated should be examined to determine how best to ensure that the interests of consumers are protected if and when retransmission consent negotiations reach an impasse. While I would urge the Commission to direct a process to review the current system, I would also encourage that it be done in such a way so as not to hinder localism, diversity, and competition.

Thank you for consideration of this important legislative matter. Should you have any questions, please free to contact my office.

Sincerely,



Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

September 28, 2010

The Honorable Gregory W. Meeks
U.S. House of Representatives
2342 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Meeks:

Thank you for your letter concerning the potential negative impact of retransmission consent disputes on consumers. I share your concern about possible service interruptions caused by stalled negotiations between local broadcast television stations and multichannel video programming distributors (MVPDs). Consumers should not bear the brunt of corporate negotiation problems.

As you may know, a coalition representing a number of MVPDs and public interest groups submitted a *Petition for Rulemaking* to reform the retransmission consent rules. The *Petition* asks that the Commission adopt new mechanisms for mandatory arbitration when MVPDs and broadcasters fail to reach retransmission consent agreements, and require continued carriage of broadcast signals during the negotiation or dispute resolution process. The *Petition* also requests the adoption of rules to change the practice of tying broadcast programming to the carriage of nonbroadcast services.

The Commission's Media Bureau issued a *Public Notice* inviting comment on the issues and proposals discussed in the *Petition*. The comment period recently closed and the Bureau is reviewing the record compiled in the proceeding to develop recommendations for Commission consideration. Given the importance of this matter to a wide range of consumers, we intend to treat this matter seriously.

I appreciate your interest in this important matter. Please do not hesitate to let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Julius Genachowski